**Autism: A Cause of Concern**

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**Abstract**

Recent research on autism has addressed many possible causes of how this disease came to be. Even with today’s technological and medical advances, doctors are still unable to find the cause to this horrific disease. Over the last few decades, there has been much debate over the cause of autism. Series of research teams have spent billions of dollars searching for a cause, while other possible causes have just been thought up and are completely irrelevant to a cause that is hopefully one day going to be found soon.This article will help better understand the possible causes of autism and what people truly believing today what could be the cause of it.

**Background**

**History:** The word “autism” was first coined in 1911 by a Swiss psychiatrist named Eugen Bleuler.1 This word in Greek means “to keep to one self” because how often children having trouble coming out their shell and talking to their peers. It was not until 1940 that America started using this term. In the first thoughts of autism, it was linked with schizophrenia because of the symptoms this disease carries.1 Even often in the 1960s and 1970s possible treatment for autism often included LSD, medication, and electric shock which the use of this was quickly put to a halt.1

**Symptoms:** There is a very broad spectrum of different symptoms that autistic people will display. One of the most well-known things they will do is not be able to establish a genuine relationship with anyone.2 One of the main reasons this occurs is because they have a hard time display emotions for people. Even often autistic children will not even show love towards their parents because they really don’t know how to.

An autistic child will often become extremely fascinated with a specific object and be extremely attached to it. It is often at the point where they are unable to go anywhere without this object. Repetitive motions are also a key component to an autistic person. Often arm flapping is something they will do quite frequently.3 Slow brain development can occur quite frequently; however, many autistic people have been known to be very smart in a certain area such as in arithmetic or English.2 Doctors will also look for speech delay with a child and if they are unable to speak within the first year of their life, this could be a very good sign of autism.2

## Diagnosing: There are several ways doctors will diagnosis autism. In diagnosing autism, there is a team of doctors that will be involved in the process. Catching a child young is one of the things that need to be done first to help benefit the child as best as possible.

## The guidelines that are set for diagnosing as set by the American Association of Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP).4 Clinical observations are a main component of this where a psychologist or psychiatrist is brought in multiple times to observe a child. These tests are often done over a period of time to set the progression or lack of progression in a child. Today, an astonishing 1 out of every 88 children are diagnosed with autism.5 Autism is much more prevalent in boys than girls. The chart below shows how much more prevalent is in boys than girls.

## http://www.dars.state.tx.us/stakeholders/autism/report/images/image007.png

## They will display the same symptoms as one another and neither gender displays more extreme than the other.4

## Treatment: Overall, the treatment process is very individualized. Often almost every person who is diagnosed with autism will need some type of therapy. These therapies include speech, occupational, and physical. Speech therapy is used for the slow development of speech that children with autism will often have. With this, it can help them even gain confidence to speak to people which they may be lacking in.6

## Occupational therapy will be used if someone has trouble with fine motor skills until the therapist feels like their skills are sufficient for regular functioning.6

## Physical therapy is used for when an autistic individual may have trouble walking or sometimes with body gyrations they may have.6 A person may need to speak to a psychologist in order to help get out emotions they may have trouble doing.6 (“Autism Speaks”)

## Theoretical Framework

## There are many possible theories as to why autism occurs in people. Throughout the years, some have totally been thrown away completely and others are still being added almost every day. Each person on this earth has their own opinion on the cause

## may it be from something they saw on television, or something they heard a celebrity say. Whatever the case may be, there still is no answer to the question people have been asking forever, What is the cause of autism? Until there is an answer people are left in question.

## While doing extensive research, I have found three main possible causes of autism. I also was curious to figure out what people’s opinions were on the thought of what the cause is versus an opinion I have concluded myself. The three main possible causes are genetics, shots at birth, and lead in the system of the mother and the newborn child.

## Case Study: Analysis of Possible Causes and Beliefs

## Genetics: The main theory of how autism shows up in someone has to do with their genetics. Scientists are not completely positive of which gene is being mutated that is linked to autism because they have seen multiple genes be linked to autism, but the duplication is something that should not be occurring in a normal functioning person.7 Genes often contain many different variations too which scientists can not quite figure out why this is occurring.

## A small percentage of the time Fragile X syndrome is linked with autism and can be seen that way in gene manipulations.7 “Experts estimate that 400 to 1,000 individual genes may play a role in the complex neurological issues involved in autism”, according to Beck.7 A huge part of this project is they want to test the parents of these children to see if they can draw any conclusions as the parents being carries of it. Some even suggest greater generations need to be tested also.

## Shots at Birth: Throughout the years as autism as gained prevalence especially in the United States, the shots were given to babies at birth seemed to stir up a ton of controversy as to the defining cause of autism. Here is a diagram shown of how shots have increased from the 1800s to the 2000s:

## [http://www.healingourchildren.net/Are_Vaccine_Safe/vaccine_prevalence_charts.gif](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&docid=ei7krJx5w83ANM&tbnid=JVbvBS9__4gbpM:&ved=0CAUQjRw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.healingourchildren.net%2FVaccine%2Fvaccines_cause_autism.htm&ei=-vd9Uba5KdPC4AOqwYGwCA&bvm=bv.45645796,d.dmg&psig=AFQjCNGgQVhFaeFLN4l_JtD85vxYx3VN1Q&ust=1367296374222732)

## One vaccination in particular, the MMR vaccine, has add to most of the talk of where autism is coming from.8 Parents are arguing for the fact that after this vaccine, they are noticing a change in their child.8 Scientists have been searching for a cause to the possibility of shots being the case. They have found no significant evidence yet and are almost completely

## doing ruling out this theory. The people who do argue for this are saying they will defend this because of the fact they have not found very much evidence elsewhere.

## Lead: There has been a lot more studies done recently relating to the lead in an autistic child’s body versus a child who is not suffering from autism. One study suggests have 74% more lead in their body than people not suffering from autism.9 The most common area this being found in old paint that may be in a house where the child is exposed to before and a short time after they are born. A way that they are testing for the lead level in the baby’s body is through their teeth.10

## Today’s Opinions: Everyone today seems to be forming a different opinion about the cause of autism. I interviewed four different people for this topic: my parents, my neighbor, who is a nurse at a local school district, and my sister, a high school junior. I wanted to truly find out what local people opinions are toward this.

## My parents, who do not have as much time dealing with children with autism didn’t really know at first what to think in forming an opinion about this. After telling them about the research I had done, they both concluded to me that it was most likely a genetic cause. They both proclaimed that the research there has them both believing that autism is caused by certain genetic make ups even though they have not been determined yet. Both of them believe a cause will be found soon and something doctors need to spend a tremendous amount of time in.

## My neighbor who is nursed seemed to have the most background knowledge about autism. Because of her job, she sees kids like this almost daily. She said to me how a few decades ago you hardly saw anyone with autism and now the numbers increase every year. A reason behind this she feels is we know how to diagnose it a lot better than we did in previous years. She did declare to me at first, about five years ago, she thought the shots were defiantly the cause of it because some of the research she was seeing behind it. It made sense to her because as the shots seemed to increase, so did autism. As the years have gone by, she believes now it is genetics. More research has been the key to her opinion changing. The idea of lead being the case seemed preposterous to her because there has been lead in paint for many years and people did not used to have autism as much as now.

## The last person I talked to was the most intrigued person to talk to, my sister. She says this something that truly has fascinated her throughout the years and something that has kept her thinking. In school, there has been many lessons taught regarding autism and children. Next year, she is looking forward to taking a class where she will get to work with autistic children her age and be able to truly see what it is like to be hands on with them every day. From what she understands, she believes it is the shots are the reason behind the cause of autism. It makes sense to her from things she has read that the shots being added to the quota for babies contributing to autism in children. She hopes her lifetime they will find a cure to this disease.

## Conclusion: After all of the extensive research I have done, I believe firmly a cause of autism will be found. Researchers have been working too long and hard for this not to be accomplished. All the theories that have been given are all probable causes and will be looked at tremendously because of the growth of their disease. America is taking a step in the right direction spending as much as they have on research and it will pay off someday. I hope I can say in my lifetime that a cause was found because that would be one of the biggest medical discoveries of all time. The children, parents, and family members of someone they know suffering from autism all deserve to have one of the biggest medical questions answered, What causes autism?

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